

# NEWS IN brief

## Syria chem handover at 86.5 percent: Watchdog

Syria has handed over 86.5 percent of its chemical weapons, the global chemical watchdog said on Tuesday, amid new claims that Damascus may have launched attacks with an industrial chemical earlier this month. The latest update comes five days before a self-imposed cut-off of April 27, by which Damascus aimed to have its stockpile removed from Syrian soil, ahead of a

## 37 killed in DR Congo train crash

At least 37 people were killed when a train derailed in the southeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo on Tuesday, the government said. The government spokesman yesterday said that police feared the death toll could rise

## Pirates kidnap 3 on Singaporean tanker

Heavily-armed pirates have boarded a Singapore-managed tanker in the Strait of Malacca, kidnapping three Indonesian crew and stealing some of its cargo of diesel fuel, the International Maritime Bureau said yesterday. The attack occurred early Tuesday off Malaysia's west coast. The tanker was believed en route to

## Fraud probe delays Afghan polls result

Afghanistan's preliminary presidential election result has been delayed by two days due to fraud investigations and will now be released on Saturday, officials said yesterday. The latest partial results of the April 5 election put former minister Abdullah Abdullah in the lead with 44.4 percent. If no candidate gains more than 50 percent, a second-round election between the two leading names is tentatively

## One dead as violent protests erupt in Rio

One person was shot dead as violent protests erupted Tuesday near Rio's famed Copacabana beach after a dancer was killed allegedly by police. After waves of street protests last year over poor living conditions, the latest unrest was yet another embarrassment for Brazil as the Latin American giant prepares to stage the World Cup in June and the

## 'One-third of Canadians suffered child abuse'

Almost one-third of Canadians experienced physical or sexual abuse at home during childhood, according to a study that warned Tuesday of a link to mental disorders and suicide. According to their study, 32 percent of adult Canadians

## TIME'S 'MOST INFLUENTIAL' PEOPLE Modi, Kejriwal top list!

The American humorist Erma Bombeck once quipped that she stopped trusting opinion poll surveys after reading that 63 percent of women had affairs during their lunch hour; she said had never met a woman in her life who would give up lunch for sex. Jokes aside, one such poll conducted by Time magazine this week has resulted in two Indian politicians — Narendra Modi and Arvind Kejriwal — making it to the top of "TIME 100 annual lists of the most influential people in the world." Apparently, they are more "influential" than singer Katy Perry who is in third place, followed by Justin Bieber at fourth, neither of whom are particularly vital to the daily life of Americans. Time's own Person of the Year, Pope Francis, is in 25th place. Time magazine explained that though the final TIME 100 list of the most influential people of the year worldwide is ultimately chosen by the editors, the magazine "seeks the input of readers in an online poll." But those who monitor the polls say the exercise is essentially flawed. It can be manipulated by a volunteer force of fanboys (and fan girls) sitting behind a computer and clicking away; each click records as a vote.



Pakistani journalists hold placards during a protest against the attack on Geo television journalist Hamid Mir by gunmen in Islamabad, yesterday.

## HAMID MIR SHOOTING Pak ministry moves to shutdown Geo TV

Pakistan's defence ministry has asked for the country's top-rating television channel to be shut down after it broadcast allegations blaming an intelligence agency for shooting a leading journalist, officials said yesterday. The ministry wrote to the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) late on Tuesday asking it to cancel the broadcasting licence of Geo television and take legal action against its staff. The move comes after Geo aired claims that Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency was behind the shooting of top anchor Hamid Mir in Karachi on Saturday. Mir, who hosts a primetime current affairs chat show on Geo and is probably Pakistan's best-known journalist, is currently recovering after being shot at least three times in his car. After the attack Geo aired comments by Mir's brother Amir Mir, also a journalist, saying the ISI was to blame. The defence ministry's letter, seen by AFP, accused Geo of a "vicious campaign libellous and scandalous in nature" and said the channel was trying to undermine the integrity of an important state institution. Information Minister Pervez Rashid said Geo could defend the allegations when PEMRA starts hearing both parties to the complaint. No-one has claimed responsibility for shooting Mir, who escaped another attempt on his life last year when a bomb was found attached to his car. Mir has in the past criticised the Taliban and also Pakistan's armed forces, and media campaign group Reporters Without Borders said he had told it on April 7 that the ISI was "conspiring... to cause me harm". The row comes at a delicate time for Pakistan's civilian-military balance, with former army chief general Pervez Musharraf on trial for treason.

## Tension simmers Russia threatens response if interests attacked as separatists brace for new assault

Russia issued a sharp warning yesterday that it will strike back if its "legitimate interests" in Ukraine are attacked, raising the stakes in the Cold War-like duel with the United States over the former Soviet republic's future. "If our interests, our legitimate interests, the interests of Russians have been attacked directly, like they were in South Ossetia for example, I do not see any other way but to respond in accordance with international law," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told state-controlled RT television, referring to Russia's armoured invasion of Georgia in 2008. Moscow also insisted that Kiev withdraw the forces it has sent into eastern Ukraine to dislodge pro-Russian rebels who have seized control of government buildings in several towns. Both Kiev and Washington believe the current crisis is being deliberately fuelled by Russian President Vladimir Putin in a bid to restore former Soviet glory. The Kremlin has an estimated 40,000 Russian troops poised on Ukraine's eastern border, prompting Washington yesterday to start deploying 600 US troops to boost NATO's defences in eastern European states neighbouring Ukraine. The first unit of 150 US soldiers arrived in Poland on Wednesday, with the remainder arriving in Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia in the coming days. Russia said it wants Kiev to pull back its army units and start a "genuine internal Ukrainian dialogue involving all of the country's regions". Lavrov accused the US of orchestrating the new offensive, noting that it was announced immediately after a two-day visit from US Vice President Joe Biden to Kiev. "The Americans are running the show," he told RT. There were no immediate reports of any confrontation between the Ukrainian military and the pro-Moscow fighters. In Slavyansk yesterday, with locals walking about as usual. A handful of rebels wearing camouflage gear and ski masks but with no apparent weapons stood outside the barricaded town hall they are occupying. In front of the building were three photos of militants killed in a weekend attack on a nearby roadblock that the separatists have blamed on pro-Kiev ultra-nationalists. The local rebel leader, Vyacheslav Ponomaryov, who styles himself as Slavyansk's "mayor" told a news conference that the two journalists being held were unharmed.

**UKRAINE CRISIS**  
Washington accused of 'running the show' in Kiev  
US troops head to region

## Obama kicks off Asia tour in Japan

US President Barack Obama yesterday assured Japan that islands at the centre of its territorial dispute with China are covered by a bilateral defence treaty. In an interview ahead of his Asian tour, Obama said the US would oppose any attempt to undermine Japan's control over the islands. US officials have made such comments in the past, but this is the first time Obama has given such explicit support. He arrived in Japan yesterday ahead of stops in three other Asian nations; South Korea, Malaysia and Philippines. Obama's trip - from 23-29 April - comes nearly seven months after he cancelled a visit to the region due to a government shutdown. China's foreign ministry has said it opposes the island being covered by the defence treaty. Obama is not going to Beijing, but relations with China are expected to dominate his meetings with regional leaders. The trip was an opportunity to reinforce the importance the US placed on Asia, former US Assistant Secretary of State PJ Crowley told the BBC. "Many traditional allies... [also] value a strong US presence in the region to balance against an assertive China," he said. The visit comes amid a "period of very significant tension among American allies, and between American allies and China", he added. China-Japan relations are severely strained over a raft of issues, including East China Sea islands - called Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China - that both claim. Japan controls the islands but Chinese ships have sailed repeatedly in and out of what Japan says are its territorial waters as Beijing presses its claim. Last year, China declared an air defence identification zone over the islands, drawing widespread criticism. Japan depends on the US for its security, under a decades-old alliance that dates back to the end of World War Two. The US, however, is keen for Japan to take on greater responsibility for its own security - an area where Obama and Abe are likely to be in general agreement. Obama is also expected to have to balance bolstering US ties with each Asian ally with improving communication among them, particularly between South Korea and Japan. The two Asian nations are at odds over a separate set of disputed islands, as well as historical issues linked to Japan's war history.



## US to deliver Apache choppers to Egypt

The United States will lift a suspension on the delivery of Apache helicopters to Egypt after concluding Cairo has upheld its peace treaty with Israel, US officials said Tuesday. To signal its displeasure with Cairo's crackdown on dissent, the Obama administration had imposed a temporary freeze on the delivery of major weapons to Egypt, including the Apache helicopters as well as fighter jets and other hardware. Meanwhile, a police brigadier general was killed when a bomb exploded under his car in Egypt's capital yesterday, security officials said, in the fifth such targeted attack in Cairo within a week. Militants have carried out scores of attacks mainly targeting security forces since the military deposed Morsi last July in the wake of massive protests calling for his

## LOK SABHA ELECTION 2014

# Modi, Rahul using black money in polls campaign

Says Kejriwal in Varanasi, files nomination

AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal yesterday accused the BJP and Congress of investing huge amount of black money in election campaign. The former Delhi CM filed his nomination papers for Varanasi Lok Sabha seat after a road show in the city. Hitting out at Modi and Rahul, he said, "I have heard that Modi has spent Rs 5,000 crore, and Rahul spent Rs 10,000 crore in election campaign. This is black money, and those who are investing such a big amount of money in election campaign will collect Rs 5 lakh crore from common man's pocket after election."



"Such type of democracy should be changed, we have to bring 'asli janata ka jantantra'. I have Rs 500 in my pocket. I have nothing to spend. I am fighting election with your help only," Kejriwal said. Kejriwal also accused Rahul and Modi of promoting 'helicopter democracy'. "People in Amethi say that Rahul comes to his constituency in helicopter once in five years. Modi is coming here tomorrow (Thursday) to file his nomination, and he will fly from BHU to Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith in helicopter," said Kejriwal wondering, "How they will know the miseries and problems of people if remain away from them".

## BRIEF ON INDIAN POLLS

### Regional parties will back Congress: Pawar

THE HINDU ONLINE

Regional leaders like Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha and her West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee will prefer to go with a Congress-supported government and not with BJP leader Narendra Modi, Nationalist Congress Party president Sharad Pawar has said. "They will be more comfortable with a Congress-supported government at the Centre," Pawar, 73, told The Hindu on Tuesday. "A sizable section in the country is opposed to him. The minorities don't have any comfort level with Modi,"

### 'Encouraged' by Modi's remarks on ties: Pakistan

AFP, New Delhi

Pakistan yesterday said it was "encouraged" after BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi's remarks regarding ties with foreign countries and asserted that it was looking forward to a stable government here to engage "quickly, comprehensively and meaningfully". Modi had asserted that he would take forward former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's principles on foreign policy and said, "I believe mutual respect for one another and cooperation should be the basis for relationships with foreign



Hamas prime minister in the Gaza Strip Ismail Haniya, right, hold up the signed reconciliation agreement as he speaks during a press conference with Palestinian Fatah delegation chief Azzam al-Ahmed in Gaza, yesterday. Rival Palestinian leaders from the West Bank and Gaza Strip agreed to form a unity government within five weeks as peace talks with Israel face collapse.

## ABUSE OF POWER CASE Court gives Thai PM more time

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's Constitutional Court yesterday gave crisis-mired Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra more time to submit her defence against allegations of abuse of power which could see her removed from office. The premier, who is facing a cascade of legal challenges to her tenure as well as months of sometimes violent street protests, must give her defence by May 2, the court said in a statement. The case pivots on the transfer of then-national security chief Thawil Pliensri after Yingluck was elected in 2011. A group of senators filed a complaint to the court over Thawil's transfer, saying it was carried out for the benefit of Yingluck's party. Under the Thai constitution -- drawn up after a 2006 coup that ousted Yingluck's brother Thaksin Shinawatra as premier -- such an offence could lead to her sacking. The court agreed to Yingluck's request for a 15-day extension -- which she made last Friday -- and said it "will hear four more witnesses on May 6", including Yingluck and Thawil.



## Nepal tries to save climbing season

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's government yesterday strove to save the Everest climbing season from an unprecedented walkout by sherpa guides as another major mountaineering company abandoned its expedition following a deadly avalanche last week that killed 16 sherpas. Guides and Western mountaineers told AFP Tuesday that the sherpas had held a meeting in the afternoon after an emotional remembrance ceremony at which they had agreed not to climb the peak this season to honour their colleagues. Government sources denied this. A government delegation is set to fly to Everest base camp today to negotiate with the sherpas.